



CULTURE & PEACE OF ERITREA

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ABSTRACT

Eritrea is an African country situated in the North East of Africa. It is bounded by Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan and the Red Sea. It is rich in its culture and peace can be found throughout the country. Eritrea was named by the 'Red Sea' which was called as Mare Erythraeum by the Romans. Later as Eritrea, when this country was colonized by Italians. The locals call as 'erithra'. There are nine ethnic groups within Eritrea. Though they speak nine different languages, the national language is Tigrinya. English is also one of the official languages. Culturally and linguistically the land of Eritrea is divided into two namely lowlands and highlands. Muslims are dominated in lowlands while Christians in highlands. All these people in these lands live peacefully. Both these lands are rich in culture. It is a land of peace and the people are lovable and very friendly. Indians are living there from 1910's when the conflict started with Ethiopia.

This article tries to explain the culture of the Eritreans. Moreover the peace of the country and the richness of the people are described.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

Eritrea is situated in the North East Africa. It is a country where Tigrinya, the Semitic language is spoken. Eritrea is a peculiar African country, where one can see the mixture of ethnic groups and languages. It has a rich tradition of culture starting from 500 BC. The pictorial in Kohaito is the best example for this. Moreover, food and its preparation in Eritrea are unique. The capital city, Asmara is one of the ancient cities in Africa and the government of Eritrea is waiting for UNESCO's approval of heritage city. Though Eritrea got independence in the 1993, they suffered war with Ethiopia and later signed in the peace agreement. Whole country is peaceful without ethnic or language issue. In this article, the author tries to explain the culture and peace of Eritrea.

2.0 ERITREA:

Eritrea is an African country situated in the North East of Africa. It is bounded by Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan and the Red Sea. Eritrea was named by the 'Red Sea' which was called as Mare Erythraeum by the Romans. Later it was called sea land till 17th century (Leonardo, 1997).

In the end of 18th century, Eritrea (considered as territory) fell in the hands of Italians and was called as Colonia Eritrea. Later in 1950's, Eritrea came under the control of Ethiopian government. In the same era, Eritrean Liberation Movement was formed by a group of Eritreans. This movement consisted of Eritreans living in Eritrea and abroad. The main aim of this movement is to get liberation from Ethiopian government. Later in the year 1962, Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) emerged and started armed struggle against Ethiopians for Eritrean independence. The war of independence went on for 30 years. In 1991, when the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) defeated the Ethiopian military forces and helped the Ethiopian Rebel Forces (ERF) to take control over Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, the whole situation changed. Due to the UN's interpretation and Eritreans voted for independence, Eritrea got independence in 1993. Eritrean People's Liberation Front's senior leader Isaias Afwerki became the first president of Eritrea and continuing till now. The newly formed government termed Eritrea as 'State of Eritrea' in 1997.

Eritrea is divided into two parts geographically. They are lowlands like Massawa, Tesseney, etc. and highlands like Asmara, Adikehi, etc. Highlands are situated in mountainous regions and the Capital city, Asmara is in highlands. (Mahder, 2008).

3.0 ROLE OF INDIANS:

During the second world many Indian militants were for Eritrea and Ethiopia. They were so efficient and brave soldiers. Some of them died and was buried in these countries. When Eritrea got independence, the Indian militants guarded the Eritrean-Ethiopian borders especially Senafe, Tesseney, Massawa, etc. They even protected the students in the schools, colleges and university. Some Indians like Rajasthans, who were business people, did trade in the border area, Tesseney and Sikhs (from Punjab) were in the higher positions of military force. The south Indians like Tamils, Telugus and others had an important role in Eritrea. Indians provided education to the Eritrea.

4.0 CULTURE OF ERITREA:

The word 'Culture' is derived from the Latin word 'colere' which means cultivation or cherish. Culture embraces religion, food, dress, marriage, music, greetings, etc. It is closely related to society and society is been written as literary

work.

Eritrea is a country of rich traditional culture. The dressing style of both ladies and gents, food items, housing style, drinking, etc. are different. Some of them are discussed.

4.1 Dress:

Eritreans wear different types of dresses. There are nine ethnic groups in Eritrea. Each ethnic group shows their identity by their dress style. Also dress style among educated and uneducated can be distinguished. Usually educated men and women in higher post wear coat and suit throughout the country. Women mostly wear hooded dress commonly known as Zuria (Samrawit, 2009). It covers ankles, shoulders and head. This will be in white color with design at the borders. In lowlands, the men wear dhoti like dress and white shirt which is made of cotton. They also use white cloth to tie round their head. They always carry a stick with them. It seems like the stuff which is carried by the shepherds. Some men carry on the shoulder and some other in their right hand. Some Eritreans use Punjabi dress but it not famous among them. The younger generation girls use jeans pants and shirts or T-shirts. But during cultural festivals or functions they use the tradition dress.

4.2 Food:

Eritreans eat different types of food such as tsebhi, injera, spegati, bread, rice and biriyani. Tsebhi is made from vegetables and meat. Lamb, beef, sheep, goat and chicken are served as meat for this dish.

Injera is a special dish prepared and served within family members, for visitors and also prepared during festivals and celebrations like, birthday, graduation, wedding, engagement, etc. The food injera is very big in size and served in big dish (plate). After serving injera in a dish, meat and/or vegetables will be placed upon the injera. Injera is also served with zigni. All the family members used to sit and take injera in a single dish sharing the food. They also feed each other with the injera. Drink during this food is fruit juice or hot tea.

Eritreans eat the usual Asian foods such as bread and rice. They eat bread with vegetables and zigni. Zigni is meat with gravy. Also bread is eaten with tea. Rice is served with vegetables. Biriyani is also a favorite food of Eritreans. Biriyani is cooked in all the highlands of Eritrea. It is a special food and prepared during weddings and festivals. It is considered as special dish (Thambi Jose, 2010).

4.3 Drinks:

Eritrean drinks coffee, suwa, milk, bera, and so on in their homes. Of these drinks, coffee is the traditional drink. The drink is served in a style of ceremony and is called as coffee ceremony (Mahder, 2008). In Tigrinya language it is known as buun. Usually this ceremony takes place when visitors come or during festivals and sometimes even as a family union. In the coffee ceremony, coffee is brewed by first roasting the coffee grains in hot coal. After the grains are roasted the roasted smoke will be filled the room with a coffee scent. The roasted coffee will be smashed and boiled in a special pot like small vessel called Jebena (Samrawit, 2009). The vessel is made of clay and the water will be boiled in that. Since raw coffee is used, it will be filtered with horsehair and poured in small cups called finjal. This continues for four rounds and each and every round has its own name. The first round of coffee drink is called awel, second round is kaleei, third round is bereka and the fourth round is called dereja. Of these the third

round of coffee has the meaning 'to be blessed'. While drinking each round the visitors or members should tell toam 'very tasty'.

Apart from coffee ceremony, tea is also offered to the visitors and tea is called as shai. Tea is prepared in two aspects such as tea without milk and with milk. Even local made liquor suwa is prepared and served in the Eritrean houses. This is prepared during festival and for the visitors. It is prepared with the leaves of suwa plant.

4.4 Music:

Eritrea is famous for its music. They sing English songs as well as Tigrinya songs. They sing songs in Tigre, Kunama and other languages of Eritrea. They use stringed musical instruments such as kraar, kebero, lyre, kobar and wara (Samrawit. 2009). Also drum is used as a music instrument by all the communities. Guaila is the best known traditional music genre of Tigray-Tigrinya. The capital city, Asmara is famous for music bars. Night clubs with bar music and dance in Asmara is one of entertainments in Eritrea. People gather there and sing songs and dance in different languages. The music bars in Asmara is called as 'Piano bar' and became famous from 2004 onwards. The famous singers of Eritrea come to Asmara and sing and dance in these bars often. Mostly the piano bars are opened for the public without entrance fee. During certain occasions like Expo festivals and so on there will be a small entrance fee.

4.5 Dance:

Dance is also famous in Eritrea. Usually they dance in a group, mix of both sex and sometimes only women. The style of dance can be called as quda (Samrawit. 2009). For quda the dancers form a circle and dance according to the beat of the drum. They move in circle bobbing their shoulders in a rhythmic fashion and shuffle their feet according to the beat of the music. Women move their shoulders than the men. Even they move their heads according to the music. The movement of the shoulders, feet and head increases gradually increases according to the beat of the drum and music. In this dance, the whole circle turns into small groups with three maximum and a pair. They face both front and back each other touching their shoulders. In pair, one of the dancers bends his/her knees and almost sits on the floor. The speed of dance increases when the frequency of the drum beat increases.

5.0 PEACE IN ERITREA:

Eritrea is one of peaceful countries in the world. After the independence, the government imposed heavy penalty over criminals in Eritrea. People step by step left all their criminal behaviors. Of course there are criminals who are imprisoned in the country. Frankly speaking, people feel guilty very easily. For instance, the price of bus ticket within the city limits of Asmara is 1 nakfa (Nakfa is the currency of Eritrea). Even if the bus is so crowded, people ask the conductor to issue ticket. Ticketless entry is punishable with 2 nakfa. The fine amount is not huge still people take ticket. It is to be noted here that, it is shame for them to pay 2 nakfa as punishment.

Eritrea is a safe country for all including foreigners. Even late night one can walk without any problems. No problems are created by the men who drink in bars and restaurants. One can walk in front of bars very comfortably and talk to a person who has drunk without any issues.

Moreover the government itself takes steps to maintain peace in the country. The peace agreement between the neighboring countries such as Sudan and Ethiopia are examples for this.

6.0 RICHNESS IN ERITREA:

Eritrea's population is very less when compared to other African countries. Hence, most of the lands are unoccupied. It is mainly based on agriculture and fishing (MEM, 2011). The country's economy largely consists in the richness of, sorghum, lentils and corn agriculture and fishing. There are industries for food processing, beverages, clothing and textiles.

Eritrea has a long coastal area. It has 1,150 kms of red sea coastal area (MEM, 2011). The coastal area in Red sea stretches from Sudan and ends in Djibouti. It has a few islands in the Red sea including Dahlak Kebir. Two ports are located in Massawa and Assab. There are more than 1000 species of fish and 220 species of corals (Christopher, 2016). The Eritreans fish in Red sea and get lot of fish such as tuna, shark, shrimp, lobster and sardine. Around 300 to 500 tonnes of shrimps are landed in a year. Also, 140 tonnes of lobsters are caught in a year (Christopher, 2016).

Mining in Eritrea started after independence. Different companies starting mining in different parts of the country. The mining companies from Canada, Sweden, Australia and China join the hands of Eritrea National Mining Corporation (ENAMCO). They get copper, zinc and gold through mining (MEM, 2011). Bisha is one of the mining companies carrying out mining in Eritrea. They mine for zinc. Nevsun Resources Ltd is another company mining in Eritrea. They mine for gold and copper.

7.0 CONCLUSION:

Eritrea is an African country located in the North East of Africa. There are nine ethnic groups in Eritrea. Though they speak nine different languages, the

national language is Tigrinya. English is also one of the official languages. Arabic is also spoken by people and is an official language. Muslims are dominated in lowlands while Christians in highlands. Indians especially Tamils take part in the culture of Eritrea.

Eritrea is very rich for its traditional culture. People of Eritrea enjoy in various aspects of their traditional culture. Usually they enjoy in dressing in the traditional way. Though Eritrean girls prefer gents and T-shirts, they wear traditional dress after their marriage. They enjoy it. The traditional coffee ceremony can be seen in all the houses. Suwa is also a traditional drink. Eating injera with the whole family adds to establish the unity of the family, friends and visitors. When we look about richness, mining plays an important role. They get copper, zinc and gold through mining which makes the country rich in the near future. Large quantities of fish are exported to other countries. There are possibilities of economic growth in the country. Regarding peace, people are leading a peaceful life in Eritrea. Though nine different languages are spoken and nine ethnic groups are found they love each other and live peacefully. No doubt Eritrea is country of culture, richness and peace.

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